

CIVIL RIGHTS.

MEMORIAL
OF
COLORED CITIZENS,

PRAYING

For appropriate legislation in accordance with the Constitution, and in the interests of freedom; respect for their civil and political rights as citizens of the United States.

JANUARY 22, 1873.—Referred to the Committee on the Judiciary and ordered to be printed.

The undersigned were appointed a committee at the civil rights mass-meeting held in Washington, D. C., December 19, and instructed to present to your earnest attention the following memorial and resolutions:

To the honorable members of the Forty-second Congress, of all parties:

RESPECTED SIRs: We are aggrieved by being invidiously proscribed. In keeping with proper self-respect, we protest, protest as men, protest as Americans, against the continuance of such proscription. There is further justification for our protest, inasmuch as the injustice is contrary to the professions, the declarations, and the Constitution of the Government. The Government must either obliterate its declaration, abolish its Constitution, be stamped as a fraud, or see that its humblest citizen is protected in equality before the law. We are not thus protected. Shall our fair nation be stamped as a fraud, and humble itself disgracefully to appease an unholy prejudice? No! As Americans we protest against it.

Fortunately, under the progress of civilization, we have not to argue either the justice or the constitutionality of our demands. Both are conceded.

The people, in their late national conventions, which assembled at Philadelphia, at Cincinnati, and at Baltimore, affirmed that we, as well as all other citizens, should be protected in equality before the law. The people in the late election ratified this declaration. We may say both parties assented to the same without opposition. The party which sways the majority in the land, and which is in control, have pledged its faith, in the language of the third resolution adopted by the Philadelphia convention, that this result should be completely secured, saying: "Complete liberty and exact equality in the enjoyment of all civil, political, and public rights should be established and effectually maintained throughout the Union by efficient and appropriate State and Federal

legislation. Neither the law nor its administration should admit of any discrimination in respect of citizens by reason of race, creed, color, or previous condition of servitude."

The chief officer of the country, placed in power by this party, has frequently assured us of his sympathy with our wrongs, and declared himself in favor of such legislation as would abolish all discrimination among all citizens, and secure to all their equal civil, political, and public rights.

The Philadelphia convention said, in substance, to Congress, then on the eve of adjournment, "Do not adjourn until all citizens are secured by appropriate legislation in their civil rights." In the face of these pledges are we to be outraged much longer? Shall we distrust?

The rights we ask to be nationally protected in are fully secured to us in some portions of the land—portions as moral, as intelligent, and in every manner as high-toned as any other—with no evil consequences, without opposition. In other portions, our rights in the management of public instruction, in inns, and by common-carriers, and otherwise, are outraged. Although the Constitution specifically guarantees the right of "an impartial jury" to all the people, we are in many parts of the Union denied this right. Though in common law, and according to constitutional principles, inns and common-carriers are bound to serve the public convenience, and not invidiously, we yet do not thus enjoy such public accommodation. The public schools, supported in common by funds taken alike from our and other citizens' pockets, are made instruments of our degradation. Our tender children are taught by separate schools that they are not as good as other children. White children are taught by white schools that colored children are inferior, and are to be despised. Such are the debasing results of the separate-school system.

When we fought to save the nation, and subsequently, when we deposited ballots, laying aside bullets, it was not to perpetuate this disgrace; therefore, we beg you to relieve us from it. Let this Congress do so before it shall adjourn. Let the incoming Congress be not burdened with our wrongs, but be free to attend to the material interests of the people.

MEMORIAL.

Whereas as a class, in the interest of slavery, we have been outraged; and whereas legislation is needed to counteract the same, to educate the people to respect our rights; it is—

Resolved, That we call on Congress to enforce by appropriate legislation, in accordance with the Constitution and in the interest of freedom, respect for our civil and political rights as citizens of the United States.

Resolved, That when a government, based on the equality of all, and demanding of all equal allegiance, punishing alike all for violation of its laws, assumes to educate the people, it should not be as classes, not invidiously, not with any proscribing arrangements tending to degrade one class of citizens in the estimation of another; but in schools where every child may strive beside his fellow for honorable emulation, with the consciousness that he is not regarded by government regulation, because of his race or color, or for any other accidental circumstance, as unfit to associate with any other child of the commonwealth.

Resolved, That inasmuch as the Constitution specifically declares that all persons are entitled to an impartial jury, it is, therefore, the legiti-

mate right of Congress to make such appropriate legislation as will secure all persons the benefit of this just and wise provision.

Resolved, That that is not an impartial jury which is constituted to the exclusion of any person on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

Resolved, That our right to enjoy the privileges furnished by common-carriers and public inns is so clearly admitted in common law, and as our Constitution forbids any discrimination, based on color, race, or previous condition of servitude, in the enjoyment of the rights and privileges as citizens is so well known we do not feel that more than the mere citation, to those disposed to deal justly by us, of the fact that we are discriminated against because of our race and color, by inn-keepers and by common-carriers, is necessary to cause the needed legislation to secure us against the injustice.

Resolved, That while we hold it as a principle that no one of our rights, however trivial, should be disregarded with impunity, because it sets an example for a disregard of another, even it may be to the forcing into our social circles those we would not have there—an outrage we would oppose with force—still, we give prominence to the fact that we are proscribed in the management of public institutions and in the impaneling of juries; and that we desire appropriate legislation by Congress to secure us in these rights, as well as in others outraged.

Resolved, That the frequent assertions made in evasion of our civil rights being secured us, to the effect that we ask legislation in disregard of domiciliary rights, are false; we emphatically deny them.

Resolved, That the thanks of the colored people of the nation are due the Administration for its just acknowledgment of all we demand of Congress, as exhibited in the noble defense of the cadet Conyers, indicating, as it does, a commendable readiness on the part of President Grant and his advisers to respect our rights, which we pray Congress to emulate by speedily granting our prayer to be protected in our rights.

Resolved, That our thanks are eminently due to Hon. Charles Sumner and Hon. Henry Wilson for their earnest and persistent adhesion to the great principles of justice and equality, which have distinguished them and singled them out as the great champions of impartial justice to all men.

Resolved, That such vote cast by the members of Congress who favored a recognition of our rights, and the needed legislation to cause these rights to be respected in the land, is gratefully remembered by us.

Very respectfully, &c., &c.,

ROBERT PURVIS.

J. M. LANGSTON.

JOHN A. GRAY.

DR. A. T. AUGUSTA.

W. H. A. WORMLEY.

JOHN H. BROOKS.

LEWIS H. DOUGLASS.

REV. J. B. REEVES.

FRED. DOUGLASS, JR.

R. T. FREEMAN.

R. W. TOMPKINS.

H. O. WAGNER, JR.

GEORGE T. DOWNING.

FRED. DOUGLASS.

JOHN F. COOK.

WM. SYPHAX.

J. P. SAMPSON.

DR. J. L. N. BOWEN.

WM. J. WILSON.

JOHN T. JOHNSON.

REV. D. W. ANDERSON.

REV. J. H. A. JOHNSON.

W. E. MATHEWS.

CHAS. R. DOUGLASS.

F. G. BARBADOES.

